

EMBRYO....NOW IT CAN BE TOLD....

Everyone told us that it was impossible to produce a poetry magazine without any mistakes, printing, typing, spelling or whatever. Everyone....

They were right.

But at least the thing did materialise from the vague ideas and conversations of a month or so back, and how long it remains for depends basically upon the general reading public. We'll keep on publishing it if you keep on buying it.

Embryo, believe it or not, is a solely non profit making magazine, and any money we get exceeding the original costs is sunk back into it. The main reason for Embryo then is not just keeping us in No. 6 for a few days, but to provide an outlet for some of the local frustrated poets, and also to try and evoke an interest in poetry in the reader by bringing to his attention some of the more popular poets...George Macbeth's piece in this issue for example, reprinted by kind permission of the author, well known for his Penguin anthologies. Mr. Macbeth recently appeared at the Anglia halls in town for a poetry reading, and found the time for a short chat with a couple of the magazine staff afterwards during which several interesting points cropped up not the least being the untimely demise of New Worlds, in which "The Silver Needle" was first published.

Acknowledgements to all contributors and all those who sacrificed their saturday afternoons to come in and help us get the thing together. Thanks also to Messrs. Phelan and Agutter, where the magazine was printed, and to Mr. Waters for letting us use the premises. Thanks again to George Macbeth, and indeed to all who had a hand in making this magazine.

And premature thanks to anybody who buys it.

Alan Moore
Editor.

Goosey goosey geiger, wither shall I wander?
Upstairs, downstairs, in my lady's chamber....
There I met a mutant, busy saying prayers.
I sprayed him with my cannister
And kicked him down the
stairs....

Alan Moore.

HANDLAND.

Alan Moore.

Sliding through the coils of the lime-light green
Catching metal wasps in a cobweb
Beckoning the mist in the peal deep wells
Fading.

Blindly weep the candles in the twilight hall
Tallow on the bones of lost heroes.

Dreaming of the moths in the ivory tower
Drifting.

Dark the magic swords in their milk white shrouds
Far and high the wail of the seagull

Glazed and ~~xxx~~ groping hands from the walls long dead
Shifting.

There the exile sleeps in his opal grove
Where the ladies laugh at the water.

Softly falls the snow from the frost giants mane
Shifting.

Purple drift the tufts of the furballs sleek
Shadowy the great smiling mushroom.

Falling down the wind as the night draws on
Lifting.

Black and violet light greet the wisps of dawn
Silver frowns the ice on the snowflakes
Echo in the wake of the phantom swan
Dying.



The desert air was waiting, taut with an almost electric excitement that hovered over the long-shadowed golden landscape in a near tangible cloud of tension. The vultures had ceased their incessant circling, and sat in small groups on the rapidly cooling boulders or on the gnarled arms of the withered trees. Heads cocked on one side, they waited patiently. The desert stretched endlessly to some dark horizon, still golden in the oncoming twilight, and maintained its disturbing silence as the vigil of the vultures continued. On the horizon a small dark stranger became visible.

Winter springs was deserted in the dusk of the day after doomsday. At the best of times it had never been a hive of activity, with its one main street bordered by the few small shops and houses, but now it was desolate. Winter springs was empty.

In the grocer's, a swarm of flies clustered about the remains of a sizeable joint of meat, the low hum drowning any other sound that might have flourished in the closed atmosphere. In its cage, a scarce four feet above the plentiful sacks of grain stacked two-deep about the bottom of its cage stand, the grocer's canary was dying. It fluttered one wing feebly, unfed for three days, but made no noise. On the floor a jar of lemonade crystals lay smashed, spewing its sticky content over the drab and dusty wooden floor. The flies were having a wonderful time. The canary was dead.

The desert grew rapidly cooler as the night advanced over the horizon, and yet still the air was heavy with an intense expectancy that grew more noticeable by the minute. One by one the vultures left their perches to rise squawking and flapping into the darkening sky, wings spread as those of some craven demonspawn. As a chill wind sprang up from the east, the tumbleweed was agitated into an unnatural animation, and sped off toward some unattainable goal. The distant black speck was now recognisable as a strangely hunched man riding a curious bicycle. The last of the vultures took to the air on a flurry of feathers, screaming as though in mortal terror.

In the small dingy coffee bar that had once represented winter springs' only night life, a thirteen year old boy sat playing and replaying a warped gramophone record. He sat alone in the deserted gloom of the cafe with the last solitary beams of daylight, through the dirty bleak windows illuminating his fat pudgy features. He seemed younger than he actually was, his eyes hidden by a thick-lensed pair of dark glasses, and a strangely malefic smile playing about his thin lips..... "THE DEVIL CAME FROM KANSAS....." With a high-pitched giggle, the boy took off his spectacles.... "HE SAID HE KNEW ME VERY WELL, BUT HE AINT NO FRIEND OF MINE..." Beneath them yawned empty white sockets. The boy had no eyes. The grocer's flies had gone quiet.

Nearer and nearer the scissor-grinder came to the dead town as he cycled across the desert. A fine spray of sand was flung up behind him as he peddled leisurely between the dunes, but it quickly settled, leaving no trace of his passing. With the night, a full and strange

(continued...)

moon had risen, and it glittered equally upon the vast bleak plains of sand and the well polished wheels of the scissorgrinders machine. In a rucksack over one shoulder a cassette tape recorder was running down its batteries. ... the devil came from Kansas... soon it stopped altogether, but the scissor-grinder didn't notice it in his relentless pilgrimage towards Winter Springs. It was by now quite dark, but the moon etched each detail clearly on the nightmare landscape. The scissor grinder was a study in silver. Not far away lay a dead canary.

In Winter Springs, sitting alone in the empty streets, sat a mad woman in a purple shawl, sketching pentagrams in the dust. Her hair fell like coarse white string onto her velvet enshrouded shoulders, and she looked sharply round as from the open door of the coffee house the blind-demon child came, seemingly heedless of his blindness. He stood looking down at her with his empty eyes, smiling and giggling as she inscribed each new pentagram. The woman ignored him. Behind her she heard the squeak of wheels, and, glancing over her left shoulder she saw the scissor-grinder, dark and terrible in the moonlight.

In Winter Springs a lame dog keeled over and died.

In Winter Springs a cat bared its teeth at the moon.

Eight miles away, across the desert, teemed a horde of warped humanity. They ran, hopped or crawled, rode, loped or flew beneath the maniac moon towards Winter Springs. At the head of the column strode an evil and saturnine figure, monk-like in its black robe. In one hand it carried an unnecessary candle, while the other was concealed beneath its cloak. From beneath this cloak came a strange fluttering. Careful to avoid dropping his candle, he drew back his cape to release the flock of pigeons concealed therein, allowing them to rise up into the blackness, red eyes gleaming. The dark had become a little darker in more ways than one. and slowly, one by one, the bodies of the dead vultures plunged from the sky, splattering against the sands that had been packed hard by the passage of feet and paws.

In Winter Springs the scissor grinder, blind child, and mad woman wandered the streets as they waited for the arrival of the others. No word passed between them as they strolled through the shadows from building to building, the only noise being the occasional cough of the scissor grinder and the ceaseless giggle of the blind boy. The gramophone in the coffee house was by now inaudible, and without any word passing between them they decided to go and wait in the grocer's. The unholy legion was by now only seven miles away, and the moon was at its zenith.

In Winter Springs a bat blinked in the darkness.

In Winter Springs the carcass of the lame dog had already begun to attract the flies that had come from the grocers.

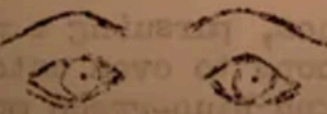
In the grocer's, in one corner, the blind boy sat giggling to himself. Coughing violently, the scissor grinder sat by the window and stared out into the empty street. He smiled. Unseen, and cloaked in darkness, the mad woman was pulling the wings from a dead canary.....

BROKEN THE BONES OF THE STONE LIBRARIAN.

ALAN MOORE

Slyly the yesterdust marches across each withered, classic spine.
Malevolent it blurs and distorts each immune idea,
Sliding amidst the decaying rib-cages of the bookmoths
Slyly the yesterdust, crawling in final grey tidal waves.
Silent the muted whispers of last years reverberant echoes
Dim and unnoticed in the clefts of each paper grotto
Broken the bines of the stone librarian
Lying in a pool of granite tears.
Close locked lie the doors of last years security
Nor despoiled by the hand of some may be-child
With rusted key in clay hand.
Only the penitent day moves relentless through this tomb of words.

(SMALL THE VOICE OF THE INSECURE
KNOWING THAT ONLY IN DEATH OR YESTERDAY LURK SECURITY.
POUNING THE DOOR WITH BLEEDING FINGERS
WEEPING FOR ENTRY.
INSIDE THE SMASHED LIPS OF THE STONE LIBRARIAN ARE GRINNING.)



And to float away on umbrella wings with the stars in your
 Into the dome of the animal singer... face
 Listen to the stalking in the cages as he sings under bars
 through to space
 Under the dome of the animal singer....
 But I'm going away to the north of my head, where the black
 sun screams

In the morning.
 I found you after eighteen years not knowing you were dead,
 Killing all the dreams

Under the dome of the animal singer.
 Over the underlands into the outlands
 Up to the downs we go out to the inn, back to the dome of
 the animal singer,

With his eyes so thin
 Oh with his eyes so thin...
 I know I'm dead.

This morning the last of the flesh fell from my fingers and
 I don't go out in the sun any more.

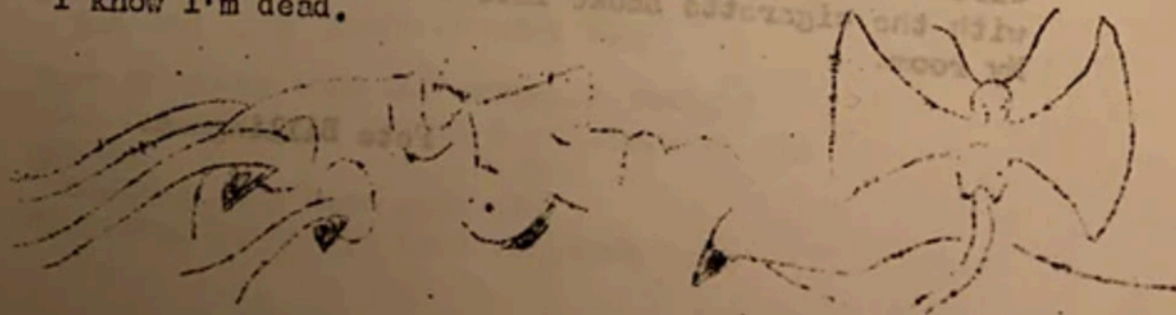
All along the river of sand I took the fingers from your
 hand and I know I'm dead.
 So back we go to the dome of the animal singer,
 And I find they're black glass eyeballs in their little
 tin box

I know they're crying.
 Seizing the cold wings of the storm in both hands I let go...
 I let go...
 Sight to the deaf and songs to the blind, up to the dome of
 the animal singer,

Wind as warm as the time within
 With his eyes so thin
 Oh with his eyes so thin.
 His fingernails had turned to ice and her hair had melted
 into a grin
 And the animal singer was falling
 With his eyes so thin

Oh with his eyes so thin.
 And now we're going away again through the bars of your
 steel wire hair
 North of my head and south of my mind
 And I find the black glass eyeballs oh so thin in their
 little tin box.

Melting the flames into the stars of the sun
 The animal singer unzips his head
 Locked in a tincan two inches square
 I know I'm dead.



Singing the songs of the small world smiles
I can burn my way through the sheets of brass, and into the
green grin,
Sliced up and spread through the space in the files.
But oh his eyes so thin.
And tin box the little man floats away on umbrella wings
With the stars in your face and into the dome of the
animal trainer
The animal strainer
The animal singer.
And tin box the little man sucked out inside his head
He smiled at the clouds and he said
everything.

Alan Moore